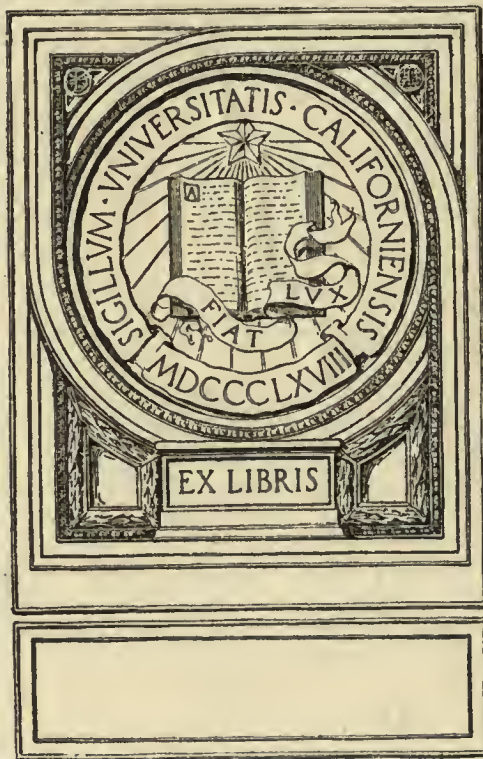



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Placement Technique in the Employment Work of the Red Cross Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men

The war has brought to our attention a new problem—the finding of employment for our crippled soldiers and sailors. There is no class of people who need guidance into the right kind of work as much as cripples. At present employment workers have organized their work, so that they can give much useful vocational information to boys and girls, but so far there has been little effort to gather together the facts about cripples which would be useful in placing them. In order to meet this need in New York City, and to be a center for information about industrial opportunities for cripples in the United States, the Red Cross Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men started an employment bureau in December, 1917. This bureau finds positions for industrial as well as war cripples.

Eventually we are all looking to the public employment bureau, run either by the federal or state authorities, as the primary solution of the employment problem. Unfortunately, however, the technique of these bureaus in this country is developing so slowly, that it is necessary for private organizations to work out the special problem—such as that of the cripple—and then after the method has been fully developed to urge the public bureaus to take over the work of the specialized bureaus. To place a cripple involves a tremendous amount of individual attention to each case. Clerks in public employment offices, who are attending to hundreds of cases in a week, can accomplish little for a cripple. Crippled men have been going around without success from one bureau to another and finally in discouragement they have taken, as a last resource, to some form of begging. Surely there can be no greater waste than that men who might be

good, industrious workers if they knew into what niche of industry they could fit, should be without employment because there is no one to guide them into employment suited to them. You ask a cripple, 'What kind of work do you want to do?' His habitual answer is 'watchman'. We all know that there are few watchman's positions and many of these are unsuitable for cripples. The purpose of this bureau is to be able to answer this question in such a variety of ways, that each man may find for himself some work that is congenial and constructive.

In October, 1916, a small bureau for cripples was started at Hudson Guild by the Federation of Associations for Cripples. The Red Cross Institute has taken over the work of this bureau and has used the past experience in formulating its plans. Meantime the bureau had secured about 150 positions. Its experience was at times very discouraging, because so few of the placements were at all constructive. It is impossible for a bureau as small as that of the Federation while at Hudson Guild, to be really effective. It indicated, however, clearly the need for work of this kind, if organized in a careful, scientific manner.

There were a number of important facts that the year's experiment pointed out. An employment bureau for cripples has two functions—employment work and investigation of industry. It would be uneconomical to run a bureau at such a large overhead expense were it not utilizing to the greatest degree all its facilities. With proper organization it is possible to gather many industrial facts at the same time as one is interviewing employers and employees. These facts when collated are more valuable than that

of any academic survey, since through employment experience one is able to check results. To have such information right at hand while one is doing placement work is invaluable. For instance, there comes in a one-armed man who is a shoemaker. Our file shows us at once that experienced men with but one arm can be used in this industry sorting leather, at coloring the heels and edges of shoes, at dressing leather on finished shoes, at pasting the edges of shoe uppers and at cutting. The man is amazed that such opportunities exist for him. How successful we will be in placing him after we have discovered his niche is purely a matter of employment efficiency.

A second fact the experiment pointed out is the need for individual work with the applicants. Each man must be thoughtfully studied as a relief worker does in case work. The man must not think he is being made a 'case' for he will resent being treated as though he came for charity when he comes for employment. For this reason it is absolutely essential that the employment bureau should not do relief work. Our experience has indicated that without the investigational facilities of the organized charitable societies, that we are apt to make all the usual mistakes. We gave to those who did not need it, and often those who were deserving were not helped. We are in the closest and most friendly cooperation with the organized charities of the city and find that they are willing to give relief where we suggest it. In the public bureaus the positions open each day are posted on a bulletin board and the applicants scramble up to the desk if they are interested in the opportunity open. Such a method is of course useless in dealing with cripples. Each problem is so unique that it must be studied individually from every viewpoint that gives light on the industrial usefulness of the man.

It is absolutely essential that the employment worker differentiate between the placeable and the unplaceable. We found in starting the bureau that we spent so much time on one or two men that many others were neglected. Unfortunately, there are always a number of men who cannot be placed. The problem is not to spend endless time in sending them to jobs

for which they are unsuitable, but rather to find out the proper relief workshop where they can obtain employment, or to refer them to the charitable organizations which will provide homes for them. The placement workers should be able to judge whether the applicant is suitable for employment or not. In this way, the handicapped employment bureau can really be a work test.

Fourth, the experiment pointed out that a handicapped employment bureau cannot be successful unless it is organized according to the most modern and efficient business methods. It is more important that the technique of this kind of bureau be perfect than that of the usual bureau, because the type of applicants we have are naturally not as desirable as those at the ordinary bureau and unless our service is more efficient we cannot expect employers to ever give us a second trial. It is only by having the most efficient office routine, that we can allow all the energies of the placement workers to be given to the really big job—that of vocational guidance.

Probably the most important lesson which has been taught us by the experience of the Federation bureau while at Hudson Guild was the necessity that the crippled worker be trained if he is to make a livelihood. It is difficult to place a skilled cripple but it is much more difficult to place a cripple who has no particular industrial equipment. No employment bureau for cripples can be efficient unless it is closely tied up with continuation, trade, and evening classes for the handicapped. There is no solution to this problem in placing unskilled men as watchmen, doormen, and elevator operators. Unless we can make cripples skilled we cannot make them self-supporting. It is natural that if an employer has two unskilled workers—one crippled and one not—when the dull season comes he will naturally discharge the handicapped man. With the skilled cripple the proposition of course, is utterly different. Some men can be placed immediately at work where they will learn a trade, but in most cases it is essential that the cripple receive preliminary training before entering industry, if he is to become in the future a self-supporting citizen.

| | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Surname | First name | Address | Flight Phone | Classification |
| | | | | Date |
| Work desired | | | | Min. wage |
| Work impossible | | | | |
| No. hours | Crutches 1 | Brace | Dress arm | Work objected to |
| | Crutches 2 | Art. leg | Work arm | Cane. |
| Can stand | | | | Blt. shoe |
| Orthopedic handicap | | | | Special interests |
| (Note left, right) | How crippled? | | | Compensation Damages |
| | | | When? | |
| Height | Weight | Hearing | Sight | Sp. Th. Card |
| Other physical defects | | | | |
| Hospitals interested and dates | | | | |
| Regiment | Company | Rank | Length of Service | Date discharge |
| | | | | Further education desired |
| Age | Date of birth | Birthplace | Parents' birthplace | Yrs. in U. S. |
| | | | | Al. |
| Single | Wid. Sep. Div. | Wife's name | Father's Mother's Brother's Sister's | Union |
| | | | | At home |
| | | | Children's names | Bldg |
| | | | Nearest friend | Go out of home |
| | | | | Live in |
| Special Training and Tests | | | | |
| School | | Date Left | | |
| Period | | Subjects | | |
| Last elem. school | | | | |
| Letter Imp. | Unus. Amb. | Br. Nt. | capa. pl. | dr. rgh. shift. sh. at. |
| Handwriting | Letter | Arith. | Spell. | Telephone |
| Chg. interested S. S. E. | No. record. | Geor. | C. O. S. | General |
| | | | | J. A. B. |
| U. H. C. | B. B. C. | A. A. C. C. | | |
| Signature | | | | |
| Referred by | | | | |
| Employees' Application. Red Cross Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men, 311 Fourth Avenue | | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--------------------|--|
| Name | Address | | Business |
| Name of Worker | Address | | Date |
| Age | Dates Employed: Began | Left | |
| Kind of work | | Seated Standing | First wage Final wage wk. wk. |
| Worker's handicap: Leg | Arm | Other | |
| Accident { Before employment here During employment here After employment here | Was worker taught trade here after he was handicapped? | | |
| Were any adaptations made to suit work for handicapped man? | | | |
| What work do you think cripples could do in this factory? | | | |
| Remarks | | | |
| Red Cross Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men, 311 Fourth Avenue. Employee's report on work place. | | | |

The methods of running an employment bureau of this kind must be flexible. Every day there must be adaptations as new ideas develop.

The most important factor in effective employment work for cripples is a full and intelligent registration of the applicant. This registration should be done by the placement worker, not by an untrained clerk, because a great deal of vocational advice can be given during the interview. It is by means of the information the placement secretary secures in this way, that she becomes equipped to give real advice. One cannot read up on the subject because there has been so little written about it. The placement worker must learn her business largely from what is told her by the applicants for work. It is often difficult to make the applicant understand why we ask so many questions. We explain that we are learning from him. It is interesting to see how the applicant's attitude changes after we explain the reasons for our questioning. Of course, another reason for this inquisitiveness on our part is the necessity for us to know more of the industrial and social background of the man than is essential in ordinary employment work.

In registering an applicant, the order in which the questions are asked is important psychologically. The first question should always be 'What kind of work do you want' because this is the most important object of his visit. This blank must be filled out in the greatest detail. Every possible line of work the applicant is suited for must be listed. Frequently there is no job open at the time of the first interview, and unless one knows definitely just what lines the man is interested in or is willing to go into, it is difficult to communicate with him about possible openings that come up in the future. An amateur at placement work frequently fills out the question 'work desired' by the comprehensive word 'anything'. Such a registration is of course valueless. It is essential also that the line 'work impossible' be carefully filled out; the doctors should advise occupations that should be avoided, and should suggest how many hours of standing the applicant can bear. The applicant should be urged to tell about any special interests he may have. Frequently

a man may have some artistic or manual bent which he does not speak about unless he is questioned, but which may be a help to us to place him in the work that is most congenial to him. For instance, a one-armed man, who has been working as a messenger for the last year has been studying sign painting evenings. If possible, we will try to place him with a sign painter.

The next part of the card is devoted to a description of the handicap and a report from the hospital. In many cases it is difficult to get a report from the doctor, but this is really essential to any intelligent placement of cripples. The applicant usually does not understand his own condition. He does not know what work will be a strain. He is too often looking for an easy berth just because he is handicapped when, if the doctor's advice is secured, we find that he can do heavier manual work than he thinks himself capable of.

The family background takes up the next section of the card. We sent in the names of most cases to the Social Service Exchange, an organization which keeps on file the names of all persons who are known to any of the relief organizations of the city. This is not a betrayal of confidence because we register the name only. No information is given to the Exchange besides this. The Exchange informs us if any other organization has known the man. Frequently we can get a valuable family background of a family from the Charity Organization Society. There is no need of our repeating the mistakes of others if we can learn from their experience.

All applicants for clerical work are given a simple clerical test. This has proved very valuable. A man whose handwriting is unintelligible and who cannot figure has applied for a bookkeeper's job. It is important to try to avoid mistakes by testing applicants as much as possible. There should be developed tests for ascertaining the physical and manual capacities of the men we send out, but so far we have done little in this respect.

The last part of the card—the work history—is extremely important. One must have the greatest detail as to the work a man has done in order to guide him into the right position. It

must always be remembered that the essential of any effective placement work is the securing of congenial work. The man must like his job or he will not stay long. The placement workers must not try to force positions on an applicant, but by an intelligent reading of his work history, should try to get him into the place for which he is best suited. It is very advisable to look up the references of all applicants, as the more we know of their equipment, the better we can place them.

After we have analyzed the work for which we think the applicant suitable, our task is to get him a job. This is a very difficult task at present because the employer does not like to take on a crippled man on account of the Workmen's Compensation Law. The law will have to be changed in some way if we want to get any number of handicapped men back into mechanical jobs. A great many employers do not like to see cripples around and we must fight this prejudice every time we speak to an employer about our men.

One method of securing employment for these crippled men is by publicity. We find that we must educate the public to the fact that there are many jobs a cripple can do. Many employers think that a cripple must be a beggar. Many more have never thought about the problem at all. Until we can get public opinion more friendly towards the employment of cripples, our placement cannot be extensive. This does not seem an impossible job, however. When we have the facts to offer, we believe we can do a great deal to change public opinion about this matter.

The other means we have of securing jobs are very similar to those used by the better non-commercial bureaus of this city. We answer advertisements in the paper, and try to get a certain number of employers to call on us regularly for workers. We keep our applicants in touch with all civil service openings. We visit employers who might be interested in taking skilled workers. When an applicant calls, who seems adapted for that particular kind of work, we call up the employer and try to interest him in our man. We secure most of our positions through the cooperation of the State Clearing

House for Employment Offices. All calls open at any bureau are listed at the Clearing House and these calls are transferred to any bureau which has a suitable applicant. It would be almost impossible for the Red Cross Institute Bureau to operate, were it not for the cooperation of the Clearing House.

After a cripple has been placed, we try to keep in touch with him. When necessary, his home is visited and, in some cases, the employer is interviewed after the man has been employed about a month. We have an evening hour and our most effective follow-up work is done then. The men come and tell of the difficulties in their work and frequently we can adjust them with the employer. Unless there is efficient follow-up work, the placement of cripples is of little real value.

The second large division of the work at the Institute Employment Bureau—the industrial survey—is quite as important as the placement work. A very definite plan has been decided on. The larger industries of New York City are listed and those selected for investigation which seem most suitable for cripples such as the shoe, leather goods, piano action, toys, and cigar factories. With each industry selected, we plan first to visit one factory. We next visit the manufacturers' association. We found that, unless we had been to one factory before going to the association, we were lacking in a basis for argument with the secretary. The trade union's secretary should then be interviewed and next the editor of the trade journal. If there are any industrial schools teaching this trade, their principal should be visited. It is essential to get the interest and cooperation of all these people before starting to visit the factories.

In making the factory investigation, there are a number of special questions that must be asked. Our important concern is, of course, with the number of processes cripples can perform in each factory. The employer at first thinks there is little work a cripple can do, but an intelligent investigator, in going through the factory, must study the machinery and suggest possible openings for crippled employees. The employer's attitude towards training adults for

his particular industry is important. Whether the work is seasonal and whether the workers are paid by the week or piece, are essential facts to determine in such an industrial survey. The general health conditions such as lighting, noise, and the like, are also important.

When a number of typical factories have been investigated in this way, we plan either to circularize some of the others, or else to publish letters in the trade journals. If the trade seems a suitable one for cripples, we must let the employers know of the fact. As soon as we have our facts definite, we must make effort to get in touch with every agency such as the employment bureaus and trade schools. Our informa-

tion is of little value if it stays on our files. We must use every modern method to give it publicity.

The Employment Bureau of the Red Cross Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men is in its infancy and yet its aims are already large. It wants to try to obtain for every crippled man and boy in New York City, a chance to earn an honest livelihood at congenial work. It wants, second, to gather information about industry which will make it possible in the future to place cripples in some scientific way. Society has made a mess of its treatment of cripples in the past. Let us hope that this Bureau may be of some help in giving to the cripples a fair chance.

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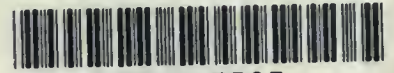
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